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Feng Mengbao's art may be interactive, but he is not pleased about being lumped in with new media artists.

His new collection features works inspired by a childhood of 8-bit gaming.



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New art hoped
to revive
historic stage

Zheng Yici is beginning its second season of performances with a number of experimental operas and plays by young directors.

The 300-year-old Temple Theater underwent heavy restoration last year after decades of disuse.



Wang Xinlei's new line of Eggcore Rabbit toys reintroduces the imaginative potential of early machinery best exemplified by steampunk style.

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City hopes culture industry can save morals

By Chu Meng

Beijing is turning its attention to cultural fields, the nation's more important soft powers, with new billion-yuan-projects in the Temple of the Heaven Historical Protection Zone and Tianqiao Performance and Culture Zone.

The plans, announced by the municipal government online on Monday, are part of a restoration of the city's traditional axis.

Xu Xi, administrative deputy director of Dongcheng District, said the project, centered around the Temple of the Heaven, will provide historical and cultural heritage protection to the areas by displacing 70 percent of the residents.

The city's 7.8-kilometer axis

passed through nine brick gates in the walls surrounding the Forbidden City, and began with Yongdingmen in the south and ended at the Bell and Drum Towers in the north.

Most of the important imperial relics like the Temple of Heaven and Altar of Agriculture are arranged symmetrically on either side.

During the Ming (1368 – 1644) and Qing (1644 – 1912) dynasties, the pedestrian path along the axis was the best and only route by which people could experience the city's commercial prosperity. It was home to stores selling everything from food to shoes, as well as entertainment venues such as tea houses to opera yards.

Over the past 60 years,

most of the path has been torn down or occupied by new residential construction, leaving only the 850-meter-long Qianmen Street. This task aims to protect existing historical heritages and to return the path to its appearance a century ago," Xu said.

The project will begin next year.

The related Tianqiao Performance and Art Zone in Xicheng District, a 15-billion-yuan development project set to begin next month, will create a 2-million-square-meter area with theaters, corporate headquarters and trade centers.

There are currently 28 theaters in Xicheng District. The project will take 10 years and create 50 theaters that adhere to international standards.

Lian Yuming, a researcher from Beijing Urban Development Researching Institute, said many foreign operas, musicals and plays cannot be brought to the capital due to the lack of a suitable venue.

But he said he worried the project may not properly protect the area's historic hutong and courtyard homes.

The projects are the municipal government's response to an order by central leaders to develop the capital's cultural industry during the next five years. The orders were handed down during a series of high-profile meetings held between October 15 and 18.

The government declared that the country has reached a critical period for cultural development as economic develop-

ment patterns begin to shift.

Peng Lin, a professor at Tsinghua University, said that China has remained spiritually immature despite its increasing wealth. To revitalize culture, the government needs to begin addressing the social ills triggered by the national frenzy for wealth.

"Instead of blindly constructing new buildings, the government must urgently prescribe a therapy that is able to touch people's hearts and minds," she said.

"If a school wants students to learn calligraphy, providing them more brushes and ink is not the way to go about it. It needs to start with teaching calligraphy appreciation and relevant background knowledge."

National family planning policy to continue

Leng Xuefeng used to beg to have a male offspring after his wife gave birth to a daughter two years ago.

Leng's wishes were doubly answered: his wife became pregnant earlier this year and gave birth to twin boys in October.

Both Leng and his wife are the only children in their respective families and are thus entitled to have a second child due to a recent change in China's decades-old family planning policy.

The policy, which used to limit urban couples to only one child has now been modified to allow any couple to have a second child as long as both parents are only children themselves.

In a culture where a newborn male is considered to be a blessing, Leng's words after the birth of his sons sounded somewhat ungrateful.

"Now my accounts will have to be frozen to save for my son's dowry," wrote the 30-year-old low-ranking official on his microblog.

Leng and his wife will have to support the twins until at least 2030, when millions of bachelors might not be able to get married due to China's gender imbalance.

In addition, tuition fees for three children will cost a fortune for the couple, who live in the sprawling metropolis of Chongqing.

The worries of the Leng family reflect the anxieties that



Despite new population problems, officials say the country's family planning policy will continue.

CFP Photo

are haunting both policymakers and young parents as they study ways to tackle the issues brought about by a changing demographic structure.

Family planning policy will not change

China will continue to use the current family planning policy, which was introduced in the 1970s, to depress reproduction, said Li Bin, director of the State Population and Family Planning Commission.

Until the recent change, urban families were allowed to have just one child, while farm-

ers and ethnic minorities were allowed to have a second child if the first was a girl.

Government statistics show that as one of the results of the policy, 400 million people were prevented from being added to the mainland's population, which currently stands at more than 1.34 billion.

Zhai Zhenwu, a leading Chinese demographer at Renmin University of China, said last week that China's family planning policy has postponed the day for the world population to hit the

7-billion mark, which fell on Monday, for five years.

Lu Jiehua, a sociologist at Peking University, said the policy has helped reduce the size of the impoverished population in China and increased disposable income for both urban and rural residents.

However, Lu also sees the policy as having an unintended effect, creating both a rapidly aging population and a shrinking workforce. Just over 13 percent of China's population is made up of

people aged 60 or above.

It is expected that the ratio will hit one-third, or 440 million, by 2050, with one-fifth of the population reaching 80 years of age or older by that time, Li said.

More challenges

In addition to overpopulation and aging, China is still facing other population-related challenges, including a gender imbalance, Li said.

Chinese parents' traditional preference for sons and the family planning policy have resulted in an imbalanced gender ratio.

The male-female ratio at birth in China is about 119 males to 100 females, well above the average of 104 to 107 boys for every 100 girls in developed countries.

Millions of Chinese men at marriageable age may be unable to find a spouse by 2020 due to the gender imbalance, a trend that experts believe will threaten social stability.

In addition, although the average education term has been extended, the ratio of highly educated people in the main labor force stands at only 12 percent, lagging far behind the average in developed countries.

"We must stick to the existing policy, raise the quality of the population and optimize its structure in order to ensure sustainable development in our population, society, environment and economy," Li said.

(Xinhua)

Young adults lament local O2Sun's closure

By Han Manman

The popular privately-owned O2Sun, one of Beijing's top bookstore chains, was forced to close all its branches after mass resignations at the head office in Xiamen, Fujian Province.

The overnight closures and resignations were reportedly related to serious financial problems.

A series of photos of O2Sun forwarded on Sina Weibo thousands of times over the weekend shocked netizens.

Two of its bookstores in Wudaokou and SOHO New Town, the most popular O2Sun stores in the city and a popular haunt of office workers and students, appeared to have been turned upside down by burglars overnight.

The sudden closure of the Beijing stores was due to financial problems at the headquarters in the Xiamen office, according to Zhang Chi, the general manager of the company.

Every manager had reportedly resigned at Zhang's suggestion, the *Xiamen Daily* reported on Saturday.

Zhang said the store had been struggling since 2010. Its

profits crashed during the past four years as sales plummeted and rent skyrocketed. Many payments to the store's suppliers had already been delayed.

Afraid that their debts could not be settled, local suppliers rushed into the two stores in Beijing, emptying shelves to minimize losses on Saturday.

Founded in 1995 in Xiamen with the slogan "Inspire Reading," O2Sun was popular with young adults and creative types. In 2003, the chain entered the capital and quickly opened 10 branches.

The O2Sun outlet in Shinkong Place was also closed, with its bookshelves emptied on Monday.

Many residents have bemoaned the closures, saying they are a loss to book lovers who enjoyed reading in a good environment.

"I can't believe that's the end of Wudaokou's O2Sun. The place gave me so many good memories and saw me through my youth," said Chen Zhining, a 27-year-old local.

Chen said he used to read books in the store during college when he could not afford



CFP Photo,

With the company collapsing, O2Sun's suppliers reclaiming their books to minimize losses.

to purchase them. When he graduated and found a decent job, he still returned to enjoy its ambiance.

"When I got a girlfriend, I took her there very often to read books in the store's coffee house," he said. "For me, it's more than just a bookstore."

Many bookstores, especially privately-owned ones, have been struggling with waning

sales as more readers turn to the Web to place their orders. A pricing system that puts brick-and-mortar bookstores at a disadvantage has been frequently blamed for the phenomenon.

To survive fierce competition from the Internet, many local private bookstores have tried to turn from selling general books to creating an environment that will appeal to a

distinct niche.

"A bookstore can't survive anymore as a store that merely sells books. It has to sell a lifestyle," said Lu Rong, owner of a small bookstore in Beijing.

Lu's store has a small coffee corner, and he plans to host more events and introduce Japanese graphic novels and memorabilia to attract young shoppers.

Battered wife of Crazy English founder files for divorce in Chaoyang court

By Han Manman

Kim Lee has filed papers to divorce Li Yang, her husband and the founder of China's popular Crazy English study program.

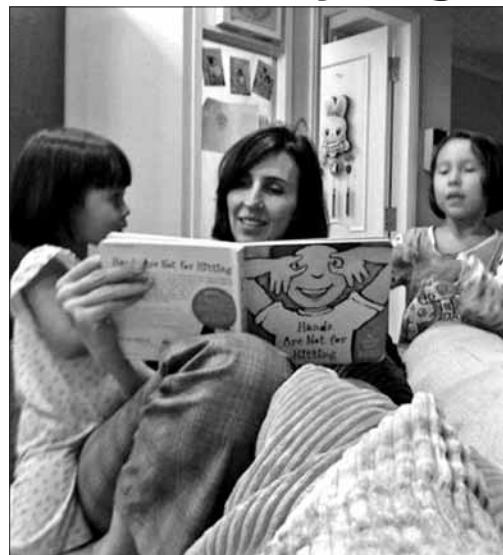
Lee, a frequent victim of domestic abuse, made the decision two months after exposing her husband's brutality on the Internet.

Her case was accepted by the Beijing Chaoyang District Court last week. Lee has demanded custody of her three daughters and an equal division of the estate. She is waiting for the court to appoint a date.

"Happiness will find me. I will leave the past behind me. Today my life begins," she wrote on her Sina Weibo last week. The message was accompanied by a picture of a "reconciliation pact" she signed with Li in September.

The divorce follows accusations of domestic abuse in early September, when Lee published pictures of her injuries to her Weibo.

"You knocked me to the floor. You sat on my back.



Lee is demanding custody of her three daughters.

Photo from Lee's Sina Weibo

You choked my neck with both hands and slammed my head into the floor 10 more times!"

She also posted photos showing her bleeding left ear, swollen forehead and knees.

The post brought attention to the issue of domestic violence, and Li was pressured to apologize to his wife and daughters.

After the apology, he allegedly quit providing financial support to Lee and the children, putting them in a difficult situation.

"True, I spoke out, but my husband went on to hurt my family more through his words and TV appearances," Kim wrote in a letter to the Anti-Domestic Violence Network of China Law Society, an NGO that aims to eliminate gender-based violence.

In her letter, Kim said the divorce was motivated by more than mere abuse. Li previously told reporters that he married Lee to study American family education rather than out of love.

"He viewed our three daughters as test subjects for his educational experiment," she wrote.

"I believe that I have done the right thing for myself and my children, now I wish to

focus my attention on helping others," Lee wrote.

"It concerns me deeply that Li continues to glorify himself and his violent acts in the media. It concerns me even more deeply that countless young people are being exposed to a very, very dangerous message," she wrote.

Yao Yue, director of Maple Women's Psychological Counseling Center in Beijing, who aided Lee after the abuse, said the couple has different priorities.

"Li may think his career is more important, but she hopes he will care for the family at the same time," she said.

Lee said on her Weibo that she is deeply concerned for all victims of domestic abuse in China and will try her best to help them after her own issue has been resolved.

"I will not fail in my mission to help millions of Chinese women gain the legal protection that they deserve. Even if you beat a woman, it is impossible to defeat her if she never gives up," she said.

Farmer's Market brings fresh, organic food

By Annie Wei

Recent food safety concerns have led thousands of urban shoppers to explore Farmer's Market, a volunteer group bringing organic produce to the capital.

More than 30 farmers attended the most recent event last Saturday at Phoenix City on the northeast corner of Third Ring Road. Volunteers set up a Halloween stage for children.

"This was our largest market meet yet, and it took a lot of preparation," said Qi Yang at a restaurant in Phoenix City the day before. The restaurant was allowing Farmer's Market volunteers to borrow some of its tables free.

Qi and the other volunteers, many of whom came directly from work, spent Friday night drawing posters and decorating the stage for the 4,000 visitors who came the next day.

Too pricy?

Farmer's Market has been operating since 2010. But unlike similar markets abroad, Beijing's is less like a flea market for fresh produce than a trendy lifestyle destination for well-to-do families.

With 18,000 followers of its Sina Weibo (@farmersmarketbj), the market has made considerable efforts to keep addressing any misunderstandings about its sales. A minority of shoppers have complained about prices that, in some cases, exceed eight times the going supermarket rate.

But organic produce costs more: especially in China – and especially in a city like Beijing, which is notorious for its poor and polluted soil.

"You cannot expect to pay the same as you would at a supermarket," said Jin Jiashu, 39, a market volunteer who works in the IT industry.

Jin moved from Shenzhen to Beijing in 2008 with the dream of starting a direct organic market in the capital. But he soon found that China's organic farms were scattered all over the country and totally disconnected from an efficient distribution network.

"That was when I ran into Farmer's Market. As I got to know the organizers, I found we were very like-minded," Jin said. He has since shifted his start-up plans to a low-carbon social network called Lohasoo.com.

With much of the design



Farmer's Market is supported by a group of volunteers.

Photo by Liu Yanyun



Farmer's Market

Photo by Wang Chen

and programming work being handled by other engineers, Jin prefers to donate his time at the market.

A trusting system

But can the vendors be trusted?

"At first, the market was just a few farmers that we trusted. Then it started to explode," said Chang Tianle, a former NGO worker and full-time Farmer's Market volunteer.

One of the most important jobs at the market is to visit each farm and interview its owners before inviting them to sell in the market.

There is currently a very long list of vendors looking to get into the market, but without more volunteers to inspect their farms, Cheng said they will have to wait. Chang is considering switching to a system that would assign vendor screening to a third party.

Market organizers use their Sina Weibo account

to announce their inspection visits for each new farm so interested customers can ride along.

"We hope our customers' experience with organic produce doesn't end at the market. They should learn more about how organic food is actually grown, where it comes from and more about the farmers," Jin said.

Little kitchen

The volunteers' effort has not gone unappreciated. Of the current 30 vendors, almost all attend every Farmer's Market events, Chang said.

Dealing with their customers face to face has helped many farmers learn what consumers want. The praise they've received for the quality of their produce has helped bolster their confidence in organic farming, Chang said.

It doesn't hurt that the vendors are not charged for

their stands.

To raise more money for advertising, market organizers began a second project called "Little Kitchen." The kitchen concept was first proposed by Emi Uemura, a Japanese woman and the founder of Farmer's Market.

At one market session this January, the venue decided to charge the group 500 yuan. Farmers donated some of their vegetables and volunteers decided to cook and sell food, using that to raise money.

The amount of food they sold could barely meet the demands of shoppers.

"Last Saturday we earned 10,000 yuan through Little Kitchen because the Halloween party brought in 4,000 visitors. We prepared a lot of food," said Yu Lu, the head chef of Little Kitchen.

Yu came to Beijing from Shanghai earlier this year after marrying a Beijing man. She quickly discovered Farmer's Market, and Chang encouraged her to get involved with the kitchen.

For the Halloween event, Yu and three volunteers began preparing dishes three days in advance. At most market events, Little Kitchen earns between 1,000 and 2,000 yuan. On its worst month, it earned only 80 yuan after deducting the cost of raw materials.

Priority issues

Having found reliable vendors, venues and customers,

the market is now looking for full-time employees.

While core volunteers like Jin Jiashu, Yu Lu, Chang Tianle and Qi Yang have worked essentially for free, the hope the next round of people involved in the market will be able to get something back for their contributions, Chang said.

Ma Xiaochao, 25, a Beijinger who recently returned to the capital after working on a farm in Anhui Province, is one such member.

"When I was in school, I was very interested in Chinese agriculture," Ma said.

She previously worked with an NGO providing aid to migrant workers in Shanghai. After that she got involved in organic farming.

While cities such as Chengdu and Guangzhou have a long history of organizing farmer's markets, the groups have done little to help farmers and consumers expand their knowledge of organic agriculture, Chang said. Unpaid volunteers could never devote enough time to the cause.

"Beijing is different," she said, because it became so popular so quickly.

"At first we only planned to host it once every several months as a symbolic gesture of our support for organic food, but the strong response from consumers showed we would be able to make a difference," Chang said.

Chinese booze challenges West

While baijiu-maker Wuliangye rejoiced at its \$400,000 (2.5 million yuan) advertisement on one of Times Square's big screens, the company wondered why Americans responded with "hostility."

In terms of sales volume, the strong Chinese spirit is among the world's most popular spirits, beating whisky, vodka and rum.

The only problem: with alcohol content as high as 60 percent and a distinctive smell, baijiu is simply too much for many American palates, according to an AFP report.

"It's just like paint stripper," the agency quoted British consultant James Sinclair in Shanghai as saying. Sinclair, 37, is married to a local woman but said he has spent 13 years in China trying to avoid the stuff.

Sinclair said foreigners in China are often advised to just pretend to be a teetotaler from the start.

Are baijiu companies like Wuliangye, who have begun exporting, doomed to fail? Enthusiasts believe the problem is simply that non-Chinese don't know enough about the drink. **(Agencies)**



The third eye Less talk, more baijiu and fun

By Huang Daohen

Lethally strong baijiu might have terrified foreigners like Sinclair, but it didn't scare everyone away. To David Swanson, an Australian engineer in Xiamen, Fujian Province, the alcohol culture in China is fascinating.

"It is quite different how alcohol is used in the two countries," Swanson said.

In Australia, Swanson said alcohol is usually associated with formal dinners and get-togethers where people do a lot of talking. "It is per-

haps more intellectual, but not as much fun," he said.

In Xiamen, Swanson discovered that when people drink baijiu, they end up singing and dancing. They drink a lot in a short period of time and toast with the exclamation ganbei — bottoms up!

"Ganbei makes it easier to get intoxicated," Swanson said. "We dance, walk around to toast, pose for photos with strangers, feeling they are our best friends."

Back in Australia, Swanson said going bottoms up

on wine can be taboo due to etiquette and custom.

Not to say foreigners didn't take shots of hard liquor. But in Xiamen, private conversations would often be interrupted by shouts of "less talk, more drink." Soon after, the tables are put away, the party starts and the fun begins," Swanson said.

But what Swanson knows about the Chinese drinking culture is confined to the cities. In rural areas, drinking is yet another story.

It is much fiercer and

more about face, which is reflected in how locals show their hospitality and make friends, said Chen Xianwen, a local businessman.

Chen once visited his business partner in a small village in Shandong Province and went face-to-face with the tradition: when others come to toast, you have to finish the glass of baijiu in front of you, then refill it and ganbei again. The host drinks once while you drink twice.

"But refusing the toasts will be rather inappropriate and rude," Chen said.

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记账本里的人生

有没有想过，金钱观、消费方式，也是每个人独一无二的人生标签。你所有的小清新小阴暗大成就大梦想，都会被它诚实反映，清晰可鉴。

市场低迷，通胀紧迫，花钱还是攒钱，跑赢还是跑输，要不要投资，买不买保险……被当下经济环境焦虑纠结笼罩的女人，你是否还能准确看到自己的生活？

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The Chinese iPhone

Budget smart phones rival Apple

10月正式上市
xiaomi.com

By Huang Daohen

Ask any young people which mobile handset is the hardest to get and they're unlikely to name the iPhone.

With its dual-core 1.5GHz CPU, high resolution 4-inch screen, 8-megapixel camera and 1,999-yuan price tag, the Xiaomi phone has the potential to be an Apple killer.

But making a smart phone is easy. The real challenge will be building a brand that customers desire.



Xiaomi CEO Lei Jun believes his company's device will surpass the iPhone as a trend setter. CFP Photo

Preorder woes

The phone Li Lin and 300,000 other people ordered online has never arrived.

For most e-commerce businesses, selling phones that haven't been made would guarantee a quick death. Not so for the Xiaomi.

The new Android smart phone is the brain child of Lei Jun, president of Kingsoft.

Lei's team, known previously for its work on the MIUI for Google's Android, has produced the lowest-priced smart phone device ever, undercutting the least expensive iPhone 4s by half.

The phone became available for online orders on August 29, selling out of all 300,000 pre-orders within 30 hours.

The company said it would begin shipping the handsets in mid-October, and the first 12,000 customers will receive their phones before November.

Others among the 37,000 earliest customers will have to wait a bit longer but no later than November 9, the company said. This could mean that a much larger number of customers will be forced to wait for several more months.

Li was among those 12,000. But he still has yet to hear new word about his phone.

"Waiting is painful, and it's worse when you have no idea when the wait will end," he said.

Li, 29, is an Apple fan. He has an iPod, an iPhone 3Gs, an iPad 2 and a Macbook. But still, he said it's worthwhile to see what many are calling a domestically-developed iPhone killer.

Others have been less enthusiastic. The bumped delivery date has been met with negative response, and many early buyers are selling their pre-order numbers on Taobao.

"With such a high demand and low supply, there is always business," Li said. "The people who failed to pre-order can still get in on the first round

of phones – for a premium."

Taobao prices for pre-order numbers range from 200 to 600 yuan. Lower numbers, which signify an earlier pre-order, cost more.

Delay or gimmick?

Lei Jun said there are factors beyond the company's control behind the delay. The flood in Thailand caused a shortage of key components for the phone.

The manufacturing for MIUI-installed phones is more complicated than people assume due to the numerous high-tech elements, Lei said at the TechCrunch conference in Beijing this week.

He asked buyers to be patient.

But Cong Shen, an analyst and editor of Zol.com, said Xiaomi might be deliberately delaying shipments to build hype.

"It is like the 'hunger strategy' many companies use. They sell everything, and then deliberately hold back the product," Cong said.

Cong said it would be strange for any phone maker besides Apple to fail to meet demand, and that 300,000 handsets is a trivial shipment for Xiaomi's Taiwanese manufacturer.

Li recently visited Xiaomi's office in Wangjing to try and get one of the phones.

"Like other start-ups, the office looks excitingly messy and small groups are busy standing around and looking at boards that contain scribbled code," Li said.

Though disorganized, the employees at Xiaomi work as a team. "They know they are doing something different and are proud of their powerful yet affordable smart phone," he said.

Uphill battle

Cong called Xiaomi a rushed product.

When Apple unveiled its new gadget, Lei tried to jump up to compete without considering the financial bottom line.

But high-end hardware is not essential to a brand, Cong said. "Putting a logo on a device won't elevate the brand," he said.

Cong said domestic phone giants like Huawei and ZTE are capable of using the same microchips in MIUI phones, but they keep their projects in their labs instead of rushing into production like Xiaomi.

"If Lei has a long-term plan for Xiaomi, there must be a long road ahead," Cong said.

Like HTC, the company has a long history as an unknown OEM producing handsets for other phone makers.

Xiaomi's current positioning puts it in the same legal danger now facing Apple, HTC and Samsung. Success means a costly showdown with known brands over multiple elements that each claim to have patented, Cong said.

Lei is not without a plan.

The Xiaomi founder told Tuesday's conference that he is aiming for Xiaomi to become a world class brand and find a place among the Fortune 500.

"Apple's iPhone redefined the purpose of smart phones during the past five years, and other phone makers have failed to keep pace," Lei said. "I started Xiaomi to take the next step."

Lei said the low price of the first handset is intended to attract users. However, future revisions of the device will be priced to profit.

China has a growing obsession with the Internet. With smart phones becoming popular, more Internet users are starting to surf on the small screen.

Lei said this creates a new market. With a total of 755 million mobile users, the country is now the world's largest mobile device market.

Statistics cited by Xinhua show that though the average mobile user spent less than \$10 per month, the Chinese mobile service market is worth more than \$7.5 billion (48 billion yuan) per month.

Market watch

Are foreign mergers a threat?

By Huang Daohen

Weeks after local police in Chongqing Municipality ordered 13 Walmart outlets to close for 15 days and fined the company 2.7 million yuan, the Ministry of Commerce stepped up to punish another foreign company.

Last week, it halted Yum!'s plans to purchase Little Sheep, a popular Chinese hotpot chain, citing anti-trust concerns.

Little Sheep said in a statement last week that it has received notice of the decision. The ministry has extended the review period for Yum!'s HK \$4.5 billion (3.67 billion yuan) takeover by 60 days.

Market watchers say the move has cast a shadow over the acquisition, as well as Yum!'s ability to succeed in future mergers and acquisitions.

On Monday, Hong Kong-listed Little Sheep fell 4.7 percent to HK \$5.05, 23 percent below Yum's bid. Yum! fell 1.1 percent to \$53.60 in New York.

But overseas investors are not the only ones concerned. The ministry's move has sparked debate among scholars and academics over the effects of growing foreign involvement in the country's economy.

While foreign companies targeting the China market see annual returns of more than 10 percent, their buyouts, to some scholars, are ways to eliminate domestic competitors.

One critic at *China Business News* noted the mergers and acquisitions have dramatically increased the risk of monopolization.

Foreign enterprises are increasingly trying to acquire domestic enterprises, including some that are state-owned, through the stock market.

If overseas businesses establish a monopoly in key sectors such as banking and telecommunications, they would have the ability to manipulate the country's market, said Jennifer Yao, analyst with Qinxue Market Solution, a local consulting firm.

But this is not the case, Yao said.

Yao said foreign companies account for only a fraction of the current mergers taking place in the domestic market.

"It is important to know that having a dominant market share doesn't necessarily mean a monopoly," she said.

Nevertheless, in the previous planned and centralized economy, a dominant market share was considered a de facto monopoly.

"Because there was no competition, prices for goods could be set at much higher market value," Yao said.

"In the current economic model, the market cannot be considered to have any industry that is being monopolized by foreign enterprises," she said.

A city without farmers



The Farmers' Games can have a real country flavor.

Zhang Xiaoli/CFP Photo

Shenzhen, a pioneering city of the country's reform and opening-up, refused to take part in Guangdong Province's second farmers' games by claiming there are no farmers in the city, sparking a nationwide debate, China Central Television (CCTV) reported last week.

Sun Xinhua, spokesman for Shenzhen's agricultural and fishery bureau, said that the modern city has no permanent resident farm-

ers so it would be inappropriate to attend the Guangdong Farmer's Games held from October 20 to 28 in Jiangmen.

The bureau said there had been no farmers since urbanization in 2004 and the province game rules state that all farmers must have been registered as agricultural residents or transferred to urban permits no earlier than January 2005.

After numerous negotiations, the city finally sent a delegation to

attend the opening ceremony and only to perform yangko – a traditional folk dance created by farmers when they worked in the rice field hundreds of years ago.

Shenzhen sent a delegation to the First Guangdong Provincial Farmer's Games held in 1988, but all the registered agricultural permanent residents switched to urban permits in 2004 due to urbanization in all villages.

(Agencies)

Comment

A real country flavor

The nationwide Farmer's Games has a real country flavor. During game days, farmers go out and compete with fellows from around the country. Although there are competitions like track and field, it's more of a get-together party.

Unlike other games, farmers even get compensated for not going to work, as well as free food and accommodation.

– Ren Xianwen,

local resident in Beijing

Shenzhen just being honest

The refusal to participate may look like Shenzhen is looking down on farmers, but it really is just being honest. It would be worse if the city sends a group of fake farmers.

– Felix Johansson, IT engineer

Games in name only

The Guangdong Farmers'

Games has little to do with farmers, for the list of athletes contains a number of non-agricultural participants such as doctors, teachers and workers. The Farmers' Games is just like any university games in which even non-university students participate.

The Shenzhen authorities said they didn't want to attend the Farmers' Games as a mere formality. The authorities could take such an attitude because Shenzhen doesn't need the financial support of Guangdong Province's Department of Agriculture. Although in the end, Shenzhen sent some delegates to "observe" the games, it made it clear that it was just fulfilling a requirement.

It's true that farmers, too, need to play sports and have their own championships, but that should not be a mere formality. Though organizers have taken some reform

measures such as including rice transplanting in the games, the event still doesn't reflect the real concerns of farmers.

The Farmers' Games should keep pace with the times. Since women, children and elders in rural areas outnumber men because most of them have migrated to cities to work, it has become difficult to get enough people to work on the land, let alone attend the Farmers' Games.

Moreover, farmers don't need games or championships as a form of recreation. What they need is something to ease their burden.

Therefore, providing them with good medical care and insurance, and opening more schools for their children, are more urgent tasks for the authorities.

– Song Guanghui, commentator for China Youth Daily
(By Huang Daohen)

Background

100 million farmers to move to city by end of decade

By 2020 the country's burgeoning cities will be home to 800 million people, up from 666 million in 2010, according to new official forecasts based on data collected during last year's national census, according to Xinhua.

The country has seen an unprecedented wave of urbanization as millions of migrant workers have flooded cities to provide the cheap labor that

has helped the world's second-largest economy achieve break-neck growth.

Despite living in cities, migrant workers are still registered as rural residents. As such, they have trouble getting social security and education stipends to send their children to public schools.

The government forecast was based on a survey of migrant populations in 106 cities last year.

It found that 20 percent of migrant families spend more than they earn, while fewer than half have any medical insurance or pension provisions.

It also showed the new generation of migrant workers – born between 1980 and 1994 – was better educated than its predecessors, with 5 percent holding college degrees.

(Agencies)

Debate of the week

Sophisticated kid genius

Zhang Xinyang has been in the limelight since he was 10, when he became the youngest person in the country to study at a university.

At 13, he continued his master's degree at Beijing University of Technology. Now 16, he again made history when he was accepted by Beihang University in Beijing last month to study for a Ph.D. in mathematics.

In a recent interview with China Central Television, Zhang showed his childishness by saying that he had on several occasions threatened to stop his studies if his parents refused to buy an apartment for him in Beijing.

His remarks have caused a stir on the Internet, with many netizens saying that he should not pressure his parents, who obviously cannot bear the exorbitant housing prices, and he should earn his own money instead.

"What a selfish boy! What use to receive so much education?" wrote a netizen. Another commented that Zhang should be labeled as an "abnormal kid" instead of genius.

Others said that if Zhang were not China's youngest doctorate student, his words would not have mattered so much.

"It's we who have a distorted perception of this ordinary 16-year-old kid because of his reputation. He is only a rebellious boy like many at that age," they said.

Zhang grew up in an ordinary middle class family from Liaoning Province. His father, Zhang Huixiang, who works as a civil servant, discovered that he was smarter than his peers when he was very young.

Since then, Zhang has educated his son to be an active learner and encouraged him to think and question.

The boy would speak about serious topics from the Iraq War to the city's image. Sometimes he would argue with his father over certain subjects.

Property tycoon mocked for own currency

Pan Shiyi, chairman of Soho China, the largest real estate developer in Beijing, said on his Sina Weibo microblog last Wednesday that he would like to publish a currency featuring his face. His message drew anger and ridicule.

After the death of Apple co-founder Steve Jobs earlier last month, Pan courted controversy by saying the best way to honor the memory of Jobs would be for Apple to offer its bestselling iPad and iPhone for under 1,000 yuan.

Pan's remarks were slammed as disrespectful, as netizens countered that Pan should offer affordable real estate prices after he himself passes away.

"If Mr. Pan passes away, please offer houses below 1,000 yuan per square meter. More than one billion people will remember you," one said.

On Wednesday, Pan unveiled his Panbi, or Pan currency, on his microblog. His one-Pan bill looks suspiciously like a Chinese 100-yuan note, except with a picture of Pan on the front instead of Mao Zedong.

After his Panbi was publicized, Pan discovered that this had become a hot topic. When he arrived at an airport later on, Pan found "almost everybody" appeared to be laughing at him behind his back.

"I felt as if I had nothing on," he wrote. Pan's move is seen as a marketing ploy for this property projects. Lawyers, however, said it has violated related laws.

(Agencies)

Old photos awaiting owners



This old photo is waiting to be identified. Photos provided by Israeli Consulate in Shanghai

By Han Manman

More than 200 photos, taken by Jewish photographer Sam Sanzetti from the 1920s to the 1950s in Shanghai, have been posted online for people to identify the subjects that appear within.

The Israeli Consulate in Shanghai recently posted some old photos of Shanghai on its Sina Weibo and asked netizens to identify the people who are featured.

"By unveiling those pictures online, we hope people can identify them and tell us the story behind the photos," said Chen Yuan, the consulate press officer, adding that some people may have lost pictures of their grandparents and this is an opportunity to find them again.

In 1922, Sanzetti, a Jewish photographer, arrived in Shanghai alone on a boat. He became one of the city's most famous photographers, with hordes of people queuing up outside his studio at Nanjing Road waiting for him. In 1957, Sanzetti left Shanghai and settled in Israel,

where he died in 1986.

A couple of months ago, his stepson, who lives in Israel, accidentally stumbled upon an old collection of Sanzetti's work in the house. He asked the Israeli Consulate in Shanghai for help in identifying the photos' owners and finding their descendants so that copies can be presented to them.

Chen said though the consulate has received many phone calls since the photos were posted, no one has successfully identified a relative.

The photos, both monochrome and color, feature people of all ages. Most are Shanghai Chinese, including young couples, suited businessmen and mothers with children. There are a few foreigners.

The pictures have generated great interest on the Internet. A little over a day after the photos were published, a large number of netizens commented and forwarded the photos. One picture of a young woman, in particular, was forwarded for more than 4,000 times.

Many have said they have

never ever seen old pictures like these from China, which helped them understand the beauty of old Shanghai.

"Those photos are really beautiful and made me imagine the stories behind them," said Li Yiyuan, a Shanghai resident.

Li said when he was young, he was very interested in stories about old China. Once, he asked his grandmother — who has since passed away — to show him pictures of her when she was young.

"But my grandmother said she didn't have old photos since it wasn't easy to take them when she was young," he said, adding that the old photos that were posted are really meaningful, and he believes every photo has a story behind it.

The consulate plans to hold an exhibition after it finds some of the photos' owners and collects enough stories. Holding an exhibition was also Sanzetti's dream for a long time, but he could not do so because he was unable to verify the identities of people in his photos at that time.



Sam Sanzetti with Chinese kids in Shanghai



Sanzetti's studio at Nanjing Road



Sanzetti's photos feature people of all ages.



Some foreigners in Shanghai also came to Sanzetti's studio to take photos.

Film festival brings Europe's best to Beijing

By Han Manman

The 4th annual EU Film Festival in China raised its curtain Tuesday. The month-long festival will be held in Beijing, Chengdu and Shenzhen and will offer a wide variety of short and feature films from EU countries.

"The festival provides a good chance for Chinese people to appreciate EU films and learn about their development, which could also lead the Chi-

nese audience to acquire a better understanding of European culture," said EU ambassador Markus Ederer.

Ederer said they have found that more and more Chinese people are expressing interest in European films, with 5,000 moviegoers in 2008 and 13,000 in 2010.

He hopes the festival will attract more Chinese people to see European films so that China will import more such

movies.

The ambassador said the films that will be screened during the festival include a diverse mix of comedies, dramas, documentaries and suspense thrillers.

New to this year's festival is a prize - the EU Film Festival Circle of Stars Award - which will be given to the most popular film as voted by the audience.

Films include France's *The*

Piano Tuner, Denmark's *Aching Hearts*, Italy's *20 Cigarettes* and Portugal's *Beauty and the Paparazzo*, which will run in commercial theaters and cultural institutes such as Broadway Palace Cinema, the Polish embassy, French Cultural Center, Cervantes Institute, German Embassy School and the Italian Institute of Culture. Each film will be screened in their original language with English and Chinese subtitles.

The EU Film Festival, held each year in China since 2008, is organized by the Delegation of the European Union to China and supported by the Embassy of Poland, current holders of the revolving EU Presidency. It invites each EU member to showcase one recent, popular and successful film, with hopes that such a sundry selection will enable China's general public to discover new faces of European cinema.

New French embassy put into use



By Han Manman

The new French embassy in Beijing's Liangmaqiao diplomatic area, the biggest French embassy in the world, will start operations next Monday.

The 20,000-square-kilometer embassy, which cost 218 million yuan, has a capacity of 300 people and combines modern French design and traditional Chinese elements, such as a golden curtain wall, a tribute to the golden tiles of the Forbidden City.

By using a lot of eco-friendly materials, the embassy will not only be used for administrative and political functions, but also serve as the venue for cultural and commercial events, with more activities to be hosted to facilitate the bilateral relationship between the two countries.

Photo provided by French Embassy in Beijing

Chinese and UK principals engage in education exchange

By Chu Meng

Forty-eight primary and secondary school principals and education officials from the UK were invited by Hanban to visit Chinese schools last week to learn about local education systems, experience school culture and establish sustainable cooperation.

Hanban, a colloquial abbreviation for the Chinese National Office for Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language, invited the delegation. It is governed by the Office of Chinese Language Council International, a non-government and non-profit organization affiliated with the Ministry of Education. The organization has launched 826 Chinese schools and classrooms over 104 countries and regions since 2004.

The principal exchange program, called "Chinese Bridge," is in its fifth year since the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding on Chinese-British Cooperation in Chinese Education, signed between Hanban and the Department for Education and Skills of UK in 2007.

The program aims to help principals and education officials in UK learn more about China, encourage the growth of Chinese language programs in their schools and promote cooperation with their Chinese counterparts.

In the most recent visit, delegates attended a welcoming ceremony held in Beijing and scholarly lectures on Chinese culture. They visited primary and secondary schools in the provinces of Sichuan, Fujian, Hunan and Jiangsu to learn about Chinese society and met

with Chinese educators.

Veena Soni, the leader of delegation, said all the participants came from England and Wales. Most were visiting China for the first time, and the trip gave them a good sense of how different education systems work.

Charles Clarke, director of Education Exchange Section of the British Council in Beijing, said China's education ministry was thinking of launching an overseas program involving Chinese schools as early as 2004.

"However, at that time, cooperation from the Chinese side merely involved establishing school pairs. That's not helpful at all," said Wang Haiyan. "During the past three or five years, some private Chinese citizens emphasized introducing British A-level textbooks. That's not enough. Recently, more and more Chinese education authorities and teachers became aware of the importance of cooperation down to course content."

Wang said in the UK, most class activities are oriented to the community the school is in. That is a useful way to cultivate students with a sense of social work and community responsibility. These are exactly what young Chinese people lack today.

"That is because one decade ago or even earlier, most secondary schools in China failed to take such content into account in their teaching plans," Wang said. "And our cooperation with Hanban intends to change that."

At the same time, the British Council launched another worldwide education exchange program with Chinese schools called "Connecting Classrooms."



Beijing Playhouse to present holiday classic

By Annie Wei

This coming holiday season, Beijing Playhouse will present the timeless story of *Cinderella*, an interactive version meant to delight the entire family.

Chris Verrill, founder of Beijing Playhouse, said that in true British tradition, audience interactive comedies have served up raucous family entertainment on Christmas for centuries.

The show has a cast of 20, with funny Christmas costumes and happy music.

The show is two hours long, so children under 3 aren't allowed. Young children who would like to interact with various characters are able to do so: just contact Beijing Playhouse ahead of time.

Where: British School of Beijing, 9 Anhua Lu, Shunyi District; Trojan House Theater, 22 International Art Plaza, Guomao, 1 Jian-guomen Dajie, Chaoyang District

When: Thursday and Saturday nights and Sunday matinees, December 2-18

Tel: 6538 4716

Cost: 260 yuan in advance, 300 yuan at the door.

Email:
performance@beijingplayhouse.com



Cinderella stage photos

Photos by Zhang Xiaoxiao

Event

Migrant School Students Art Program

In this edition of the "Rainbow Journey" Migrant School Students' Art Program, UCCA teams up with Green Kids, the Embassy of Israel in Beijing and Israeli illustrator and caricaturist Hanoch Piven to present a fun and educational workshop about making collages. Piven is an acclaimed illustrator and caricaturist. Since 2003, he has been conducting workshops across the globe. These workshops apply the principles of his collage technique, prompting children and adults to experiment with common everyday objects to create works of art. Apart from being an easy and fun way to create art, the workshops have been embraced by educators, art therapists and management consultants as an efficient tool for raising psychological issues to the surface through play and creativity.

Where: Ullens Center for Contemporary

Art, 4 Jiuxianqiao, Chaoyang District

When: November 2, 1:30-4 pm

Tel: 5780 0200

GtB call for volunteers

Greening the Beige (GtB) is celebrating its annual event series this month to raise environmental awareness in Beijing, and it is seeking participants to get involved.

GtB depends on creative contributions, time and energy from community members. It is looking for partners and collaborators that are interested in celebrating green goodness. Anyone interested, please email info@greeningthebeige.org.

Where: Various venues

When: November 3-30, daily

Contact: Carissa@greeningthebeige.org

(By Wei Ying)

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Low-cost bike rental reboots with trial program



Chaoyang District plans to launch 5,000 bikes for public rental by early next year.
CFP Photo

By Annie Wei

To ease the city's heavy traffic, Chaoyang District will establish 30 bike rental spots to provide thousands of bikes for public use.

There are three spots currently open along Chaoyangmen Wai Dajie: on the east side of Chaoyangmen subway station, south side of Kuntai Jiahua Hotel and east side of Landao Shopping Mall.

A valid ID is required for bike rental, which is free for the first hour and costs 1 yuan per hour after.

These three trial spots maintain a total of 60 bikes. By early next year, Chaoyang District is planning to have 173 spots with 5,000 bikes.

Renters need to apply for a rental card, which requires a deposit of 210 yuan.

Although the charge is only 1 yuan after the first hour, the system will only charge a maximum of 10 yuan per day.

By the end of November, the local traffic committee said anyone with a bus or subway card is able to rent a bike, but with a minimum deposit of 200 yuan.

The new rental bikes are green, and each station has a machine for swiping one's rental card.

In the near future, the website chaoyangbike.com will launch, giving people information about their rental card and bike locations. Customers will also be able to book bikes online.

ASK Beijing Today

Email your questions to: weiyi@ynet.com

Someone stuck a water bill to my door but I don't know what to do with it. How do I pay my water bill here?

Easy: just take the bill to the nearest bank or post office and tell someone there you want to pay for your water. Or you can pay at select ATM machines: just type the number on your bill into the machine.

I'm thinking about starting a company but am having trouble finding the most updated information and requirements. Here's my situation: I don't have much money, so I might need to bootstrap the business. But I still want everything done in the right way. Any tips or suggestions?

We consulted a Canadian named Nathan Siy who has launched a wholly owned foreign enterprise (WOF) before. Siy said he set up his through a law firm here, Dezan Shira & Associates, but they were very expensive and not very helpful. They were informative, but there were a lot of steps and procedures and forms that they couldn't assist with. He even had to go back to Canada to get some documentation from a bank.

Each time he opens a company, he uses an agent. The laws and regulations are complex and change all the time. Finding an agent is fairly easy, though prices vary: some ask for 1,000 yuan to start a local Chinese company, while others may request up to 20,000 yuan to start a WOF.

Joint ventures, on the other hand, aren't something

anyone can "start" in China. To register a joint venture, you must already have a company in your home country. It must have been in operation for at least a year. Only then can someone seek a local Chinese partner.

Hi, I'm new to Beijing and looking for some furniture: a wooden desk, a couple of chairs, a leather foot rest and some other odds and ends. Can you recommend a quality shop or somewhere I might get a fair price?

Here are two recommended places:
IKEA

Like all its worldwide branches, IKEA provides a large selection of furniture from bed to desk to armchair, but there are not many leather products. The prices are reasonable. The quality is average, and there is a service center where you can make returns if you are not satisfied with the product.

Where: 59 Futong Dong Dajie, Chaoyang District (nearest subway station is Taiyanggong on Line 10, but you still need to walk quite a distance. Buses 408 and 753 are recommended; get off at Wangjingqiao Dong)

Jimei

Jimei is another furniture shop, and there are a number of them in Beijing. Individuals usually run the shops in Jimei, and the prices are negotiable. You will be able to find both wooden and leather products here.

(By Wei Xi)

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New acts revive an old theater

By He Jianwei

A wooden temple is hidden among the hutong south of Hepingmen.

More than 500 years ago, it was a theater for Peking opera. This autumn it is becoming a stage for plays and operas by pioneering young directors. The artists and troupes hope to breathe new life into the old theater with their works.



Cooking a Dream

The freshly carved beams and cinnabar paint make the wooden temple seem comparatively new.

But this temple has nothing to do with Buddhism. The temple, also known as Zheng Yi Ci, has been a Peking opera stage since 1712, when it was converted during the Kangxi Emperor's reign (1662-1722).

The temple has a long history dating back to the dawn of Peking opera. Through the golden age, revision and revival of the art, its old beams have played host to countless giants of the stage. Like many old buildings of the city, the temple was seriously damaged during the Cultural Revolution. In 1995, businessman Wang Yuming found the temple in a sad state of disrepair and sponsored its full restoration.

But regular performances never resumed, and the temple closed in 2005.

Four years later, a new round of restorations began. Today, it is well known for being the country's only fully-preserved wooden opera theater.

It reopened last year as a destination for Peking opera performances. Its first and permanent production is a panorama of Mei Lanfang, including his six classic and popular works: *Battle with Invaders*, *Drunken Princess*, *The Goddess of Luo River*, *Take Command of Troops*, *Farewell My Concubine* and *Sigh Scattering Flowers*.

The organizer chose Mei's work not only because he brought Peking opera to the outside world, but also because of his close relationship with the theater. Mei's grandfather, Mei Qiong, performed in the theater with the Sisi Troupe in 1881. Mei himself performed there in 1919. And his son Mei Baoyu later performed on the same stage.

To celebrate the 300th birthday of the theater, it is beginning a new season of performances from the end of this month, including experimental operas and dramas by young directors.

The opening performance will be *Cooking a Dream*, directed by Huang Jing, one of the most promising directors since veteran directors Lin Zhaohuan and Meng Jingshu.

Inspired by *A Story of a Dream*, a 1,200-year-old legend from the Tang Dynasty (618-907), Huang aims to reveal the traditional value and philosophy passed down for thousands of years.

The play tells the story of Lu, a young man eager for fortune and fame. Lu is caught in a heavy rain and has to stay in a small inn. Inside, he meets a mad Taoist priest who gives him a magical pillow.

Waiting for the boss of the hostel to cook, Lu falls asleep on the pillow. In his dream, he experiences the laughter and tears of a whole life: he succeeds in the imperial examination, marries

the daughter of a prime minister, becomes homeless after a war and spends his twilight years alone and poor.

The story expresses a philosophy of life: a Chinese proverb says that glory, honor and wealth are nothing but shadows.

The drama premiered at the Avignon Theater Festival in France in July.

Huang chose the ancient story to tell a traditional Chinese tale to a French audience. "This experience helped me clarify what kind of drama are most needed in China. The great Chinese philosophy and glorious traditional culture are what we theater workers should be exploring today; we must combine this valuable heritage with modern art to create new dramas," Huang said.

The French tour amplified his commitment to this idea.

European playwrights and audiences responded with admiration at the superb skill of the performers and the wisdom of Chinese philosophy. A French viewer told me that this play was easy to understand even without the help of subtitles," he said.

Back in Beijing, Huang was excited that the drama would be showed in the old theater. "Like the ancient city walls of Avignon, the Temple Theater is a suitable stage for this legend," he said.

Like Huang's attempt at dialogue between the traditional and contemporary, Owl Studio is presenting its latest play *The Good Person of Beijing Jing*, derived from German playwright Bertolt Brecht's *The Good Person of Szechuan*.

The Owl Studio's version tells of three gods who travel far to find people in Beijing, but instead they discover a world of greed, dishonesty and selfishness.

The director arranged the use of a sanxian, a three-stringed plucked instrument, in the play's music. Some of the acting with the instrument as accompaniment.

"I nevertheless think this instrument had such power to tell a sad and dreary story," the critic Liu Xiaofeng said.

Besides drama, the programs include several experimental operas.

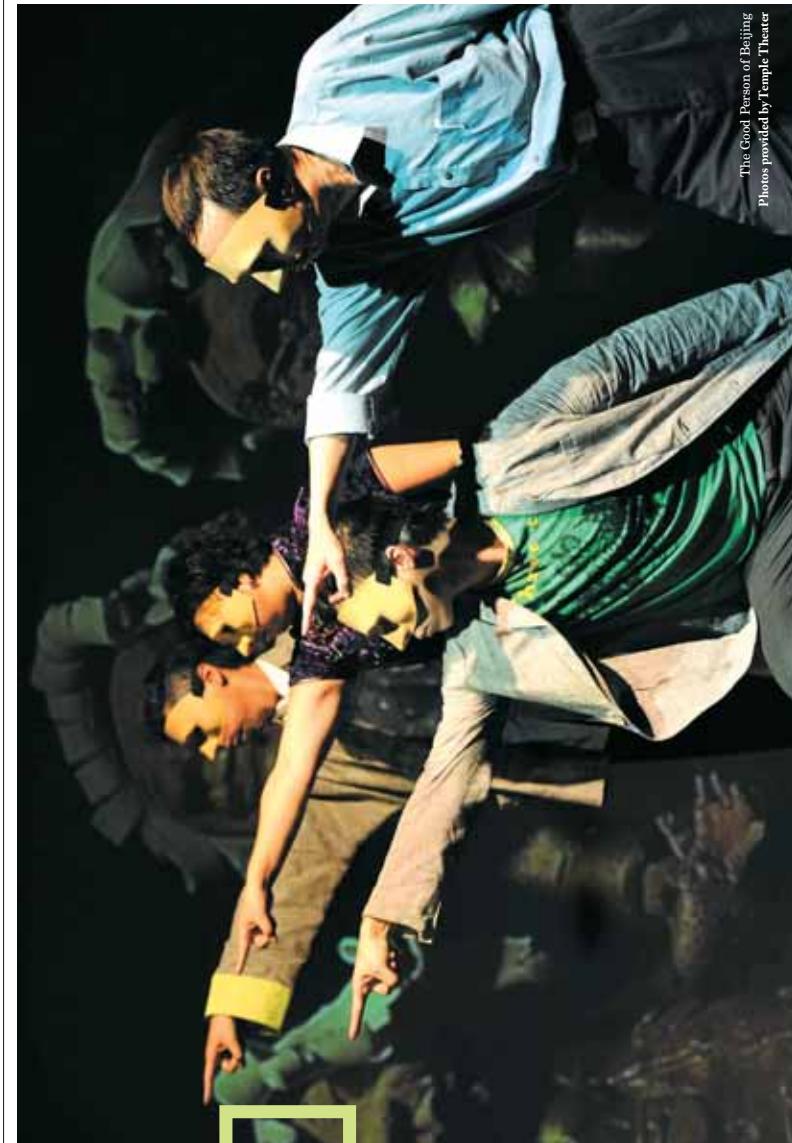
Taiwanese director Liu Liang-yen reveals the rights and wrongs of secular society through a day in the life of the widow Cao Qitiao, a tale adapted from Eileen Chang's novel *The Golden Cage*.

In this monologue, Liu blends the techniques of Peking opera with modern dance and comprises new classical poems for four scenes.

The programs that the organizer selected act as dialogue between the traditional and the avant-garde.

"Like the old Temple Theater, we hope people can rediscover the value of tradition through these plays," Huang said.

Center stage

The Good Person of Beijing Jing
Photos provided by Temple TheaterThis Life of Mine
Photo by Chen Jun

Programs

Cooking a Dream

Pioneer director Huang Ying adapts a legendary novel of the Tang Dynasty that depicts life as a dream.

When: December 17-18, 7:30 pm
Three Stories of Revival from Death

This experimental Peking opera combines three ancient stories about life after death.

When: December 21-22, 7:30 pm
Mei Lanfang Classics

The performance includes six of Mei Lanfang's classic and popular works: *Battle with Invaders*, *Drunken Princess*, *The Goddess of Luo River*, *Take Command of Troops*, *Farewell My Concubine* and *Sigh Scattering Flowers*.

When: December 23-25, 7:30 pm
Cao Qitiao

This one-man Peking opera is adopted from Eileen Chang's novel *The Golden Cage*, a sad story about a widow's life.

When: December 24-26, 7:30 pm
This Life of Mine

A monodrama, adapted from Eileen Chang's novel *The Golden Cage*, is presented by the Beijing Theater (Zhebing Teater) in the Xihewan District.

Admission: 80 yuan for individual and 160 yuan for a 12-person box.

Gate of Temple Theater

Life the 'great feral novel'

By Charles Zhu

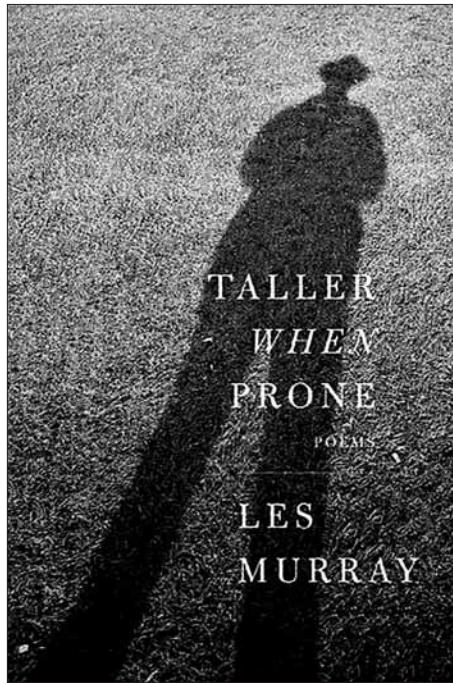
Australian Les Murray, one of the greatest living English poets, recently published *Taller When Prone*, his first collection of poems since *The Biplane Houses* in 2006.

Murray, an annual contender for the Nobel Prize for literature, masterfully composes verse with grace and dexterity and pays great attention to the rhythm of Australian vernacular.

At 72, the poet is particularly skilled at portraying rural life – its rituals, natural beauty and the simple people who live it. His poetic interests includes traveling, snoring, dead bodies, childhood consciousness, birds, motorways, elegies, meditative fragments and satirical sketches.

These are united by Murray's extraordinary virtuosity in form, rhythm and sound. Critics have said there is no other English language so rooted in its sacredness, so broad-leaved in its pleasures and yet so intimate and conversational. Joseph Brodsky says, "He is, quite simply, the one by whom the language lives."

Murray has lived on the Australian dairy farm where he was raised since 1985. It is from there that he observes nature from a wider, and yet stranger, perspective. In one poem, he portrays the python's terrifying "hare lip" and the way "black cockatoos come crying over, unflapping as bleriot monoplanes, to crash in pine tops for the cones."



Taller Than Prone

By Les Murray, 96pp, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, \$24

There are many funny images in Murray's poems, such as when he suggests Heathrow Airport be changed into "London Sexburga Airport" and when observing humans fighting a wild fire. For Murray, a glance at the skies reveals "horse-penis helicopters" dropping water.

In a poem called "Fame," he writes "We were at dinner in Soho and the couple at the next table rose to go. The woman paused to say to me: I just wanted you to know I have got all your cook books and I swear

by them!" It concludes: "I managed to answer her: Ma'am they've done you nothing but good! Which was perhaps immodest of whoever I am."

People who love Murray's poems find the current collection shows a cheerful poet after the depressive state of his recent work, particularly in *Subhuman Redneck Poems* and in his memoir, *Killing the Black Dog*.

In the three or so years since his last collection, he seems to have experienced a change of emotions with a happy turn toward the cheerful and optimistic.

This collection is rich with optimism, though it does not contain anything that will be remembered among his masterpieces. Talking about funny subject matter is a diversion while his health improves.

All the verses here are short, the longest not more than two pages, and have on average a three-stress line. Most of them are concerned with the vernacular, the urban and country life.

One of the features of his poetry is its mystic nature. His poetry has increasingly become a riddle. Some of his fans seem to be impressed by this language, while others equate it with a cryptic crossword.

Kate Kellaway of *The Observer* notes, "Murray has a gentle way with his poems, letting them go, never forcing a conclusion. One of his great gifts is that he is non-interventionist and never blocks a view – art in apparent artlessness."

Between dreams and reality

By He Jianwei

The painter Fang Nan lived off his wife for several years when no one would purchase his work.

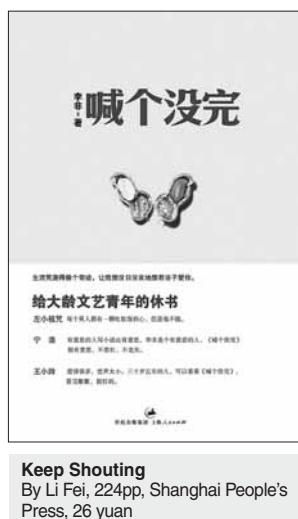
When he first picked up his brush, his simple and crude studio bristled with excitement. But at the age of 30, that energy is long gone.

Faced with a blank canvas, Fang turns to work as a male prostitute.

Fang is the main character of Li Fei's debut novel *Keep Shouting* (Han Ge Mei Wan), a tale of the dark crack between the dreams and reality of Chinese youth, published by the Shanghai People's Press in August.

As a graphic designer, screenwriter and novelist, Li considers it a semi-autobiographical work of life in China's literary circles.

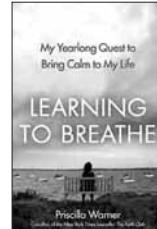
Li started to write the novel in the autumn of 2009. "Writing a novel was one of my childhood dreams, but I never put my pen to the paper until



Keep Shouting
By Li Fei, 224pp, Shanghai People's Press, 26 yuan

Bookworm book listing

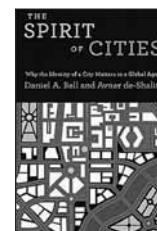
The Bookworm recommends the following titles to *Beijing Today* readers.



Learning to Breathe: My Yearlong Quest to Bring Calm to My Life

By Priscilla Warner, 288pp, Free Press, \$23

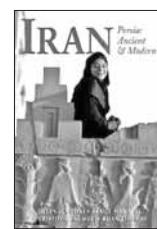
This is Priscilla Warner's memoir about a daughter returning home to visit her mother, who discovers the threads of history, love and care that hold a family together. It is a universal story about voice, breath, loss, illness and the redemptive power of love.



The Spirit of Cities: Why the Identity of a City Matters in a Global Age

By Daniel A. Bell and Avner de-Shalit, 352pp, Princeton University Press, \$35

This book revives the classical idea that a city expresses its own distinctive ethos or values. In this original and engaging book, the authors explore how this classical idea can be applied to today's cities, and explain why philosophy and the social sciences need to rediscover the spirit of cities.



Iran: Persia: Ancient and Modern

By Helen Lovejoy, Bruce Wannell, Christoph Baumer and Bijan Omarani, 464pp, Odyssey Publications, \$24.95

For more than three millennia, Iran has been a melting pot of civilizations. Under Cyrus the Great, Persia was the center of the world's first empire, which stretched from the Mediterranean to modern-day Pakistan.

(By He Jianwei)



Video games inspire art

By He Jianwei

Video games and game music are the heart of Feng Mengbo's creations.

As one of the first Chinese artists to explore computer art, Feng's work has often been conflated with "new media." But Feng rejects that label, declaring that real art transcends its medium.

One of the main works at his latest exhibition is inspired by the video game Mortal Kombat.

At the opening ceremony of the exhibition last Friday, Feng announced his intent to give up computer art to return to his roots in oil painting.

The main hall of Today Art Museum is like a playground built around Feng's *Mortal Kombat*.

Unlike the original game by Midway, the characters in the game include Feng, his relatives and friends.

Every character has 28 animations for jumps, punches, kicks, sweeps and throws. The animations were created from thousands of photos that were cut out and converted to eight-color graphics with the aid of a computer.

For background music, Feng assigned a different 1980s pop song to each character. Stage backgrounds include urban and rural scenes with demolished buildings, abandoned furniture and bicycles.

Two players can compete in head-to-head mode.

"I've been fascinated with video games since my teens, and fighting games are my favorite," Feng said. "My passion for video games inspired many of my creative works in the early 1990s."

Unlike his older brother, who often played outside, Feng stayed indoors throughout most of his childhood. "I was busy at home, reading books, drawing and playing games by myself," he said. His father was an engineer, and Feng often played with spare machine parts.

In the 1980s, he discovered the second generation of video games through a Nintendo Famicom his father purchased in Guangzhou as a gift. Feng still obsesses over the simplicity of 8-bit gaming.

After graduating from the Department of Print at the Central Academy of



“I wanted my works to resemble games. Having fun is the reason I create. ”

Fine Arts in 1991, Feng devoted his art to gaming. Two years later, he purchased his first computer and began exploring graphic design software.

His first interactive work, *My Private Album*, made in 1996, was a presentation of three generations of his family's history.

He first applied video games to art in 1997 with *Taking Mount Doom by Strategy*, a work that combined the video game *Doom* with 48 clips from the modern Peking opera *Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy*, one of the eight model



Q2012 is an electronic game installation based on the Quake III Arena.

Photos provided by Today Art Museum

plays of the Cultural Revolution.

Another work in his latest exhibition is *Q2012*, an electronic game installation that uses a dance pad. Feng designed an avatar of a nude woman connected to her mobile phone. Her only weapon is a bunch of roses. Actions are driven by the *Quake III Arena* game engine.

"I grew up with video games. When I began my artistic career, they were my first inspiration," he said. "I wanted my works to resemble games. Having fun is the reason I create."

But 20 years of computer work seems to be enough for Feng.

"I'm feeling tired of it. For the

past 20 days, I've started every day by turning on the computer. I spent more than 10 hours a day in front of it. It put me out of touch with reality," he said.

With most of his works requiring more than one year to complete, he has had little time to devote to painting since 1999.

He called his latest exhibition *Mengbo 2012*. "If the year of 2012 turns out to be the doomsday some people predict, then this exhibition will be my farewell to my old life as a video game artist," he said.

Feng hopes his future career will be in more traditional media.



Feng Mengbo (left) instructs models to pose for his Mortal Kombat clone.

Mengbo 2012

Where: Building 3, Today Art Museum, 32 Baizhan Lu, Chaoyang District

When: Until November 12, 10 am - 5 pm

Admission: 20 yuan, 10 yuan for students

Tel: 5876 9804

For those who have a crush on cashmere

By Annie Wei

In weather like this, who doesn't love the softness and warmth of cashmere? Try wearing cashmere underneath your down jacket to stay as temperatures dip.

Taiwan-born Vivian Chang, who has been living in Shanghai for 16 years, said she has always had a "crush on cashmere." In 2009, she started a cashmere brand fittingly called Crush.

Last Friday, she brought her new collection to Beijing.

Chang said her cashmere yarn is purchased from China Erdos, a leading company based in Inner Mongolia known for producing wool and cashmere that is ready-to-wear. "They have quality cashmere yarn," Chang said.

But Erdos' style better suits older, more conservative Chinese people. Chang wants her Crush Collection to be for the young and chic.

As a customer, the first impression of Chang's cashmere is the high concentration of colors in orange, white, blue and green. Scarves in such colors look warm and cozy, and start from 1,300 yuan, priced according to size.

Customers will then notice the focus on details. We like how Chang has designed a pair of long figure-less black gloves (780 yuan): using laces around the hand keeps it tight and warm. They are must-have items for winter, as many women like wool dresses or Max Mara-style outfits. When the weather cools, just add an extra pair of leather gloves.

Short 100 percent cashmere dresses or sweaters start from 2,000 yuan.

"I added a color coral for this winter," Chang said. Considering nude and camel were so popular last year, coral can be a newer, more stunning and feminine choice.

"You don't need to get rid of your light tan cashmere from last year. Mix it with coral and it gives you a new look," she said, preferring designs that are renewable and sustainable from year to year.

Another item Chang recommends is the two-color dress in purple and black, coral and light beige, a trendy design for this year around the world.

Crush Collection

Where: BNC, Bo9A, The Village North, 19 Sanlitun Lu, Chaoyang District

Open: 10 am - 9:30 pm

Tel: 6416 9045



Crush cashmere is available at B.N.C.



Designer Vivian Chang (left) and top model Du Juan



Mesh lace striped cocktail dress, 3,280 yuan



Cropped zipper jacket, 2,350 yuan



Chunky ribbed-knit cape, 4,580 yuan

Photos provided by Crush Collection

Cheap but good meals at Sanlitun



Home-style cooking at Hong Lu

*Braised fish, 78 yuan
Photos provided by Hong Lu*

By Annie Wei

For all the improvements at Sanlitun, the majority of restaurants haven't figured out how to offer a quality meal at a modest price. But *Beijing Today* readers are in luck: two small restaurants in this area offer hope on this front. One even offers a great German Riesling.

Unlike at the upscale Sanlitun Village, small and nice eateries are still available around Sanlitun Nan Lu. A new restaurant named Hong Lu opened five months ago next to the furniture store Casa Pagoda.

Recent patrons Simon Xue and Miumiu Liu, a local couple that works at a big corporation, said the restaurant was a treasure.

"Simon loves Beijing food and he eats here three times a week," Liu said. And the prices seem fair: a big feast for six costs 300 yuan.

The restaurant focuses on home-style dishes such as hutong sidagang (30 yuan), four starters including traditional pickles and braised pork

placed in jars and served on a rectangular wood plate. Its ganzha xiaowanzi (25 yuan), deep-fried pork balls, are handmade and delicious with salt and pepper.

Its braised beltfish (46 yuan) is one of the most recommended. When deep-frying something, many chefs like rolling the fish with mung bean flour first. But it's not the case here. The beltfish gets its kick from the sauce.

Zhasuanzhi jiangzhouzi (56 yuan) is sliced braised pig feet with garlic sauce. The feet have been stewed for a long time and come out soft and tender. It's great when mixed with strong garlic sauce.

The restaurant is operated by the same company that owns Zhongbalou, a creative Yunnan restaurant in an alley near the Sanlitun embassy area that's known for homemade drinks in pretty glasses. Recommended is the homemade yogurt (8 yuan).

Hong Lu is a three-floor restaurant in the style of an antique Anhui Province building. It's a bit cold inside, as heating isn't available until November 15.

Hong Lu Restaurant

Where: 6 Sanlitun Nan Lu, Chaoyang District
Open: 11 am - 9 pm
Tel: 6593 8970
Cost: Average 50 yuan per person

Homey Italian dishes at Scott's Family

Although it's been open in Xinfucun for two years and has a great reputation among diners, the hidden location of Scott's Family has kept it from gaining widespread renown.

Muyu Huazhi, an active VIP member of dianping.com, said it's one of her favorites. "I like simple, honest and sincere food," she said. "For me and my other foodie friends, gourmet is about the food itself and more important than its environment or fame."

The restaurant's free bread is delicious. The owners built a brick oven in the restaurant to bake pizza crust and bread, which they serve with fresh homemade basil and olive oil or basil butter. "If they use a higher quality flour, the bread skin can be more crispy and have a stronger aroma," Muyu said.

Muyu's recommendation includes the Greek salad (28 yuan). The vegetables are fresh and crispy, the cheese is soft and the sauce of black olive oil and vinegar is the key, she said.

Parma ham with honey melon (38 yuan) comes as four chunky pieces topped with cheese. The melon is sweet and juicy, a great comfort for the dryness of winter.

Seafood soup has a great

flavor. At a price of 28 yuan, it has more fresh seafood pieces than any restaurant in the entire area.

The shrimp, asparagus



Salad, 30 yuan

and white wine risotto (48 yuan) is Muyu's favorite. "I like asparagus. It's well cooked, crispy and tender. The cheese is thick but not greasy. The rice is well done with a little bit of hardness."

Many people also like the restaurant's décor: plain, cozy and homey, what a family kitchen is supposed to look like.

Scott's Family

Where: 41 Xingcun Lu, Chaoyang District (a green house next to Xinfuchun Bingguan in the alley between Aojia Jiudian and Gangwang Guoji, opposite of Canadian embassy, Dongzhimen Wai Dajie)

Open: 10:30 am - 10 pm

Tel: 6416 0600

Cost: Average 60 yuan per person



Seafood soup, 28 yuan



Yogurt, 8 yuan

Great Riesling from Dr. Loosen

Germany is known for its Riesling. Dr. Loosen is one of the most recommended German vineyards that produces quality white and red wines.

The vineyard has been in the same family for 200 years, with current owner Ernst Loosen the sixth generation.

To achieve high-quality wine, he reduced his crop size and stopped using chemical fertilizers. He also believes in traditional cellar practices that let the wine develop and present the best of the grapes' flavor.

Dr. Loosen is now available at SummerGate wine distributor. For a low price, try Dr. Loosen Riesling, Mosel 2009 (160 yuan), which is sweet with a nice cream and apple flavor and a low alcohol level of 8.5 degrees.

For something more sophis-

ticated, try the Urziger Wurzgarten Riesling Spatlese, Mosel 2009 (630 yuan). It's sweet and goes well with spicy foods like Sichuan chicken or fish.

Unlike its other wines, which have a strong, clean and fruity flavor, Dr. Loosen's Erdener Treppchen Riesling Auslese, Mosel 2007 (780 yuan) has a stronger, refreshing mineral flavor. Its Riesling Berenauless, Mosel (375 milliliters) 2006 (690 yuan), with nectarine and apple flavors and the sweetness of plums, goes well with desserts.

Pudao

Where: Unit F1-01, Tower AB, The Office Park, No 10 Jintong Xi Lu - north of Hanwei Plaza, east of The Place, Chaoyang District
Open: 10 am - 10 pm
Tel: 8590 6181



Dr. Loosen

Love with music and literature

By He Jianwei

Folk musician Zhong Lifeng's description of himself on his website is eye-catching, to say the least: "Music is my faithful wife and literature is my lover. I love both of them. Call me a criminal - I'm a man who committed bigamy with music and literature."

Zhong is regarded as one of the country's most literary folk musicians. Last month, he released his fourth album, *As Sad As Love Affair*, singing about undying love, nature and humanity.

A musician is like a farmer who has more passion for the land than for his harvest. "Ballads are like crops and the singer like a farmer who carefully cultivates those crops," Zhong said. "He sings of endless love to nature, the Earth and humanity."

Zhong draws his inspiration from film and literature. He named his band Borges after the Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges, and he founded the music label Wild Strawberries, named after a film by Swedish director Ingmar Bergman.

Born in a small town in Zhejiang Province in 1974, Zhong describes his childhood as lonely and disturbed. He felt inferior as the youngest child in his family because he thought he was not as beautiful and smart as his brother and sister. Only music could console him.

When he was in fifth grade, his parents visited relatives in Hong Kong. His uncle sent them a cassette recorder and his mother bought several tapes, including one of songs by Taiwanese pop singer Teresa Teng.

Zhong hurried home as soon as class was over to listen to Teng's tapes. One day, he bought a blank tape and recorded his own singing. His brother praised him for his potential.

To pursue his dream of becoming a singer, Zhong bought a one-way ticket to Beijing in 1995. He brought his songs to many music companies, but only one producer gave him an offer.

His first job in the company was to interview singers who presented themselves. To his surprise, many singers in Beijing were confident and thought they could be superstars if only given an opportunity.

A few months later, the producer offered him a record deal



Debut album Beside the Road

and he thought his dream would come true. But he was disappointed that there was no progress for a long time, so he took his talent to the city's bars.

He met many folk musicians during those days and was recognized by Song Ke, a famous producer who has promoted Chinese folk music since 1990s. Song promised to give him a contract.

But two years later, Zhong still didn't have the opportunity to release his album. He became agitated and decided to get away from Beijing.

In the spring of 2001, he went to Qinghai Province and lived with a family of shepherds for a year. Their life inspired him, and

he took that experience back with him to Beijing.

In 2004, he signed with Song's new music label, Taihe Rye Music, and released his first album, *Beside the Road*, two years later.

In February 2009, he founded Wild Strawberries and afterwards released his second album, *The Crazy Fruits*, characterized by sentimental songs permeated with pathos. Zhong believes the sorrowful themes were not about desperation but about reminding people of hope and the good old days.

At the end of 2009, he released his third album, *She Knits Sweater For Me*, which contains 13 songs he wrote after 1997.

Zhong writes many of his songs while traveling. He wrote "Without You, It Will Make More Forests Sorrowful" in a small hotel in the autumn of 2003 after hearing a middle-aged man reading a paragraph from Russian novelist Fyodor Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment* - a passage about the character's reaction to his mother's letter. Then, suddenly, Zhong heard the man howl in grief.

A part of the song goes, "Whether you are a man with a broken heart or like a speechless bird keeping silent, in the endless forest you'll hear the mother's call of tenderness from a distance."

In his latest album, Zhong blends orchestration and coloratura with folk songs. In these 10 songs, he incorporates elements of Wuzhen, a water town in Zhejiang Province, and Lijiang and Shuhe, the ancient towns of Naxi people in Yunnan Province.

CFP Photo



CFP Photo



Portrait of Zhong Lifeng by Liu Fengzhi



“Life is life.
Its existence is
somehow
reasonable.”

Hao Jie (middle)
directed the village
actors in the film.

Sexual struggle in the countryside

By Zhang Dongya

Four single men, Old Yang, Bighead Liang, Gu Lin and Liu Ruan, live in Gujiagou Village, Hebei Province. They regularly sit out on the sunny hillside to chat.

Their lives and stories, described in the film *Single Man*, exemplify the sexual frustration of elderly men in rural China.

Director Hao Jie, a native of Gujiagou Village, recruited villagers to play themselves in the film. Hao said the story is about much more than rural sex, but about a way of life. The low-budget film was an instant hit on the Internet, and Douban users declared it “completely outclasses commercial blockbusters.”

Guijagou is a small hamlet in Wanquan County in Zhangjiakou, Hebei Province. Hao, born in the village in 1981, lived there until he was admitted to the Beijing Film Academy in 2001.

In its glory days, the village had 80 households and 300 people. News spread quickly in the hamlet.

Hao was fascinated by gossip and frequently pushed his parents to tell more than they should.

“I’m the kind of person who is always thinking of home, and I prefer life in the countryside,” he said. Even after a decade in the capital, Hao speaks with his village accent and in Zhangjiakou with fellow natives.

“Home is where my spirit belongs, and shooting a film set in my hometown was my greatest wish. I will continue

to focus on this theme in the future,” Hao said.

Only the female lead of the film is a professional actor. For that role, he recruited Ye Lan from the Central Academy of Drama, who made her screen debut with this film.

The film is shot in Zhangjiakou dialect and features local operas like *Erren Tai*, a duet performed in Kangbao County in Zhangjiakou, which is similar to the *Erren Zhuan* of northeast China.

Hao said both the local opera and dialect are part of the village’s intangible culture.

“Nowadays, young guys in the county refuse to speak the dialect. They only use standard Chinese and look down on the local language. I wanted to record and even highlight this speech while it remains in use,” Hao said.

“Dialects throughout the country are facing similar

disuse, but in Zhangjiakou the situation is severe. Our dialect has never enjoyed the attention given to Sichuanese or Cantonese,” he says.

In the film, the role of Old Yang is played by a villager called Yang Zhenjun. He is abandoned by his poor

“I’ve never thought it was right or wrong, black or white. We people have been living this way for a long time. It’s real, and I want to record it. I don’t think anyone has the right to judge our lives.”

family and begins an affair with his former lover Er Yatou, who is now the wife of the village’s chief. He provides Er Yatou with money to support her son’s education, though she also maintains sexual relationships with other men who contribute similar portions of their pension. The director himself played the role of Er Yatou’s son in the film.

Throughout the village, single men contribute their earnings to sleep with others’ wives in a potentially conflicting rural network.

Some critics interpreted the phenomenon as a distri-

bution of sexual resources in rural society; others heaped criticism on the male-female population imbalance.

A survey in 2011 showed that the ratio of males to females in the countryside is about 117:100, leaving more than a million marriageable men with no hope of finding a spouse.

“I see the phenomenon as the village’s attempt to remain viable. The people there have a hard life, and sex is sometimes their only release,” Hao said.

The film also explores the problem of bride kidnapping. Ye Lan played a Sichuan woman who was kidnapped and taken to Gujiagou, where Old Yang bought her as wife.

Hao said it is hard to judge such happenings. Some women from Sichuan in the village find themselves in a better situation, in many cases introducing their sisters and friends to eligible bachelors.

The entire film is shot as a documentary. The cast members essentially play themselves, but using aliases.

Their authentic Zhangjiakou dialect was impressive to many viewers.

“People always ask me how I managed to direct so many amateurs. The truth is I didn’t have to do anything,” he said. “The stories

are based on their lives. I just told them the story, and they remembered how they felt and re-enacted the scene.”

The village’s oldest relatives are illiterate and learned their lines through oral instruction.

The film ends with the life of a single man, Liu Ruan, who is one of the village’s gay residents. He is skilled at papercutting and embroidery, but lives a lonely life. The actual resident is based on someone who recently entered a nursing home.

Some residents of Zhangjiakou criticized the director for exposing one of the darkest parts of the country. But Hao considers “dark” to be relative.

“I’ve never thought it was right or wrong, black or white. We people have been living this way for a long time. It’s real, and I want to record it,” he said. “I don’t think anyone has the right to judge our lives.”

Single Man won the Special Jury Prize Kodak Vision Award at the Tokyo Filmex International Film Festival in 2010. It earned Hao the nomination for Best New Director at the San Sebastian Film Festival in Spain and Sao Paulo International Film Festival in Brazil.



Liu Ruan (left) once married a woman when he was 12.



Old Yang (left) bought a kidnapped woman (right) from Sichuan for a wife.
Photos provided by Heaven Pictures

A discovery of folk gems in Hotan

By Zhang Dongya

Hotan, located in the southern part of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, is famous for its "Three Treasures": jade, silk and carpet. In addition, the city has an abundance of cultural gems, including the ruins of an ancient Buddhist kingdom.

The temple ruins remain in the boundless desert, while old folk handicrafts that have been passed down through generations can be bought. *Beijing Today* joined a tour to Hotan to check out its history, geography and Uyghur gems.



The Rawak Temple Ruins in Taklamakan Desert in Luopu County

Rawak Temple Ruins for Buddhist history

Hotan was called Khotan and was a large Buddhist state until 1006, when Muslims came to dominate the area. Many ruins from old Buddhist temples remain in Hotan, telling of past history. One of the most conspicuous is Rawak Stupa in Rawak Temple Ruins.

Rawak Temple Ruins, located in the Taklamakan Desert in northwest Luopu County in Hotan, was once a representative Buddhist temple in the Khotan Kingdom. There is an adobe Buddhist stupa in the center, with surrounding walls forming a square yard.

Tourists have to walk 20 minutes from the bus to the site through sand dunes as part of the Taklamakan Desert. The ruins is half-buried in the drifting sands; only the top of the stupa remains, with some walls around it.

It is said the temple was built around 150 during the Han Dynasty (202 BC – AD 220), but the historical relics from the temple are mainly from the

Southern and Northern Dynasties (420–589).

A wooden signboard shows some pictures of cultural relics from the temple, including Buddhist statues. Locals said more murals have been uncovered.

To protect the desert, wooden bridges are built on the sand to connect the sites. The ruins are enclosed by wooden fences. Locals said the appearance of the ruins always changes: sometimes more of the stupa and walls are exposed, and sometimes much of it is buried in the sand.

The local government is considering building a huge cover on the site to prevent the ruins from eroding, but people are debating whether that might damage the old site.

Sand there is soft and smooth and shimmers in the sun. Some withered, yellow plants grow around the ruins.

Camels are around the desert: several run wildly, while others are for tourist use. Uighur owners will guide the camels from the front – a unique and extraordinary way to traverse the dunes.



Hotan Museum is rich in local history and hard-to-find information.



Yulungkash River is famous for producing nephrite jade.

Hotan Museum, local historical hub

To better understand Hotan Prefecture's history and get some hard-to-find information about the region, you are advised to visit the Hotan Museum.

First built in 1979, it was moved to a new site in 2001 and opened to the public in 2005. It is a three-story building, with two large exhibition halls and six smaller halls. Around 10,000 items are on display.

The museum proudly displays ancient Hotan, when it served as the starting point of the Jade Road and was an important checkpoint on the Silk Road. It also has important Islamic art and handicrafts from the 11th century, when the Kara Khanilar kingdom took control of Hotan and replaced Buddhism with Islam. Some cultural relics from ruins like Niya in Minfeng County are also exhibited.

Hotan Museum

Where: 342 Beijing Xi Lu, Hotan

Tel: 0903-2519 286
Admission: Free

Continued on page 21...



Riding on camels is a unique way to traverse the desert's dunes.



Nephrite jade trade



Locals produce carpets and rugs by hand at Hotan Carpet Factory.

...continued from page 20

"Three Treasures" of new Hotan

The old Khotan Kingdom had "three treasures" related to Buddhism, and now Hotan has three as well: jade, silk and carpet.

Nephrite jade tour

In Hotan are many stores that sell nephrite and jadeware. The top nephrite is from the Yurungkash River, which is famous for black jade, gray jade and white jade.

It's reported that the river has run out of jade, so people are mining it from the Kunlun Mountains. But your guide will lead you to Yurungkash River to experience historic jade exploration.

The river is currently dry, but it swells between March and April. The riverbed is quite broad, with piles of rounded stones. You can pick some small ones and take them back with you.

Not far away is a newly built square with walls depicting the history of jade mining in Hotan.

Near the river is a market for trading nephrite and jadeware. Most jade here is very expensive.

To learn about the complete process of producing jadeware, your guide will lead you to a jade carving factory in the city. It is a small plant, with dozens of craftsmen processing jade. Visitors can see the raw materials and artisans working on it.

Handmade silk fabrics

Hotan was once an important place along the Silk Road. The old Khotan people passed down the technique of rearing silkworm and waving silk fabrics from the 5th century. The most famous silk product is Aide Lai Silk – a bandhu craft – which is produced by Uyghurs in Hotan and Kashgar.

Uyghur women like to wear Aide Lai silk fabrics, which come in stylized Uyghur patterns.

In Jiya Town, Luopu County, there is still a handicraft workshop that manufactures silk fabrics by hand. Locals reel off raw silk from cocoons and spin and weave on old looms. The silk products like scarf, cappa, round hats and cloths are all tech-nicolored and soft to touch.

Aide Lai Silk Factory

Where: Jiya Town, Luopu County, Hotan
Tel: 0903-6691 048

Price: 140 yuan for scarf, 100 yuan for cappa and 80 yuan for a round-edged hat.

Carpets in eastern style

Hotan people like to roll out rugs and carpets in their homes, and also hang tapestries on their walls. They are skilled at producing woolen and silk carpets and fine felt.



A Uyghur sells fruit that is native to Hotan

In the street, you can see Uyghur women weaving carpets and rugs by hand; in bazaars, there are many stalls that sell colorful products.

Located on the east bank of Yurungkash River, Hotan Carpet Factory is a good place to see the process of producing carpets and rugs by hand. Founded in 1950, it still keeps old techniques like carding, wool washing and dying. In a large plant, Uyghur women are busy weaving large-sized carpets. Visitors can learn to work with the old tools from the craftsmen. There is also an exhibition hall where you can purchase some products. They provide postal service for bigger products.

Hotan Carpet Factory

Where: 22 Alaer-Hotan Highway, Hotan
Tel: 0903- 8812 729



Various naan at a bazaar in Hotan



Craftsmen spin and weave on old looms at Aide Lai Silk Factory.
Photos by Mockingbird

About Hotan

Hotan is located in southern Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. It is an oasis town in the Tarim Basin, north of the Kunlun Mountains and south of the Taklamakan Desert. Hotan Prefecture is a multinational area: 96 percent Uyghur and 3 percent Han.

Traffic

Getting to Hotan: Fly to Urumchi, then take a connecting flight to Hotan. There are two or three flights every day between Urumchi and Hotan, and they take one and a half hours.

Accommodation

Yuzhou Century Hotel
Where: 22 Yingbin Lu, Hotan
Tel: 0903-2525 555

This four-star hotel has more than 180 rooms, three dining halls and a Halal restaurant. The average price for a standard room is 230 yuan. It is only 20 minutes from the Hotan Airport by car.

Agency

Xinjiang Discovery International Travel Service
Where: Room 402, Unit 1, Building 2, Hexie Garden, 30 Yingbin Lu, Hotan

Tel: 0903-2028 183

Steampunk designer's toys stir imagination

By Chu Meng

Fans of steampunk culture believe that imagination is more important than knowledge. Knowledge is limited to what has been known, while imagination embraces potential.

Steampunk began as a sub-genre of science fiction and came to prominence during the late 1980s in Britain. It sets science fiction tales against a background of Victorian Era steam power.

Today, steampunk has grown into its own subculture with related literature, films, comics and animation. Most blend elements of science fiction and fantasy with anachronistic technologies seen through a Victorian perspective.

The 31-year-old independent toy designer Wang Xinlei is one of China's few steampunk superstars.

His two-year-old 909 Toy Studio has been working hard to re-introduce China to the imaginative potential of early machinery through the new toy series "Eggcore Rabbit."

Every Eggcore Rabbit is 10 centimeters tall. Unlike the traditional cute animals, it is half abstract, half war machine. The two halves of the rabbit generate an intense visual contrast.

"That's the beauty of it. It is a contrasting and unconventional design," Wang said. "The robot side consists of 150 parts collected from abandoned machinery. We try to make each figure as detailed as possible."

Last week in T-space Yah Gallery in Beijing, 909 Toy Studio held its first "Heavy Party" exhibition of 50 works from the Eggcore series, 22 of which were designed by guest steampunk artists like Erick Scarecrow from the US and Michihiro Matsuoka from Japan. For many viewers, it was a first glimpse of the essence of steampunk.

Wang described himself as a bad child born with a gift for comic illustration. Inspired by the Transformers cartoon that aired during his elementary school years, he began creating his own steampunk figures.

"I usually got lost in my own world. What teachers said was nonsens to me," he said.

With poor scores, Wang

ended up attending a low-ranking middle school. The poor study environment gave him more time to focus on his designs. Two years before university, he began to work as a part-time graphic designer at an advertising company.

"I felt rich," he said. "I usually gave some of my money back to my parents to support the family's daily expenses."

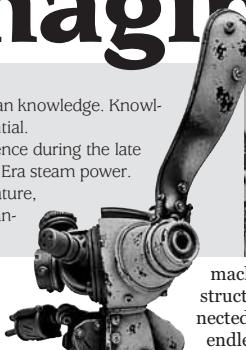
At university, he dreamed of emulating the success of famous drop-outs like Steve Jobs or Bill Gates. He quit school after one and a half years as an animation student.

"What they taught from textbooks was boring and useless to me, and it wouldn't help improve my life at all. Besides, I already had a part-time design job with a good salary," he said.

Wang rejects society's restrictions on work and aesthetic tastes. His most hated criticism has been people who declare his work is "not right" or "not beautiful" in a traditional sense.

In 2003, he left Beijing and moved to Shanghai to open his own graphic and comic design company.

"Beauty is something I identify on my own," he said. In 2005, steampunk found renewed popularity in the US and Europe. The fantastic



Wang Xinlei (right) and his toy studio

machines, sophisticated structures and subtly connected parts provided him endless inspiration.

"Those designs were imaginative and limitless. I could create anything based upon one prototype," he said.

In the same year, he and two other modelers started to create the first Eggcore Rabbit. The draft design began from paper sketches and later began being assembled from a variety of materials.

The first prototype was finally manufactured from a toy factory in Guangdong Province on September 9, 2009. It costs 909 yuan. The coincidence inspired Wang to name the new studio 909 Toy.

It was another two years before he found a way to reduce the material cost enough to put Eggcore Rabbit into mass production. Even Hong Kong toy company said the figures were too complex to manufacture.

A factory in Dongguan, Guangdong Province, suggested using vinyl and wood for the rabbit's side and black cast iron for the robot side.

The first products were released in June. "I can't exactly remember how much energy and money we devoted to this toy. It is small even though 156 parts come together to shape its robot side," he said. "It's hard to imagine how complicated and delicate it is from first glance."

As the sale date drew near, Wang invited 15 international steampunk artists like Erick Scarecrow from the US and Michihiro Matsuoka from Japan to redesign Eggcore Rabbit. He mailed out the black-and-white prototype as a reference.

"We were surprised to get back 22 works! The first, by Japanese designer Michihiro Matsuoka, arrived within one month. But the one by Erick Scarecrow from the US has been the most popular."

"When my assistant asked me to look at a new toy from a young Chinese steampunk toy studio, I had no idea Eggcore Rabbit would bring out my inner fanboy," Matsuoka said. "It has crazy detail, but manages to retain a designer's aesthetic."

Wang sees himself only as the first among Chinese steampunk designers: not a pioneer. He said Chinese steampunk designers are far less experienced than international designers, but they do have access to better manufacturers.

"Many end consumers have yet to realize the value of designers' toys, especially handmade ones, which cost 10 or 100 times more than common vendor products," he said.

No wonder Wang's Eggcore Rabbit series is indeed expensive, which are sold from 1,200 yuan to 2,680. The price of three special edition sets coming in next week will be more than 3,500 yuan, including a package box designed by the studio.

Hotel



InterContinental Hotels & Resorts a leader in sustainable travel

The world leading luxury hotel brand InterContinental Hotels & Resorts kicks off its Responsible Business Week last Monday.

The one-week initiative is designed to celebrate the hotels' achievements and in its effort to promote sustainable travel to its destinations.

Driven by its "In the Know" brand positioning, InterContinental is committed to bringing an authentic travel experience to its guests

by letting guests in on the locals' tips. Through a partnership with the National Geographic's Center for Sustainable Destinations that began in 2009, InterContinental hotels and resorts has been working to protect the heritage and communities that surround its destinations.

The theme for Responsible Business Week in Greater China this year is "Preserving City Memories," which pays homage to Chinese cities in which the

21 InterContinental hotels and resorts are located.

"InterContinental shares with its guests an abiding belief that the most enriching and rewarding travel is derived from an authentic experience," said Keith Barr, chief executive officer of IHG Greater China.

"China has such incredibly rich and diverse heritage, and we at InterContinental Hotels & Resorts are proud to be a part of that, and to bear responsibility for its preservation."

Thailand Former Prime Minister resided in Grand Millennium Beijing



Grand Millennium Beijing had the pleasure of hosting former Thai Prime Minister Surayud Chulanont and his wife Thanhphuying Chitravadee Chulanont from October 27 to 28 during their recent trip to China.

Airline

VisitBritain offers great fares on British Airways

Chinese travelers eager to discover Britain can take advantage of the great fares announced by British Airways last Friday.

The airline, in partnership with the nation's tourism board, VisitBritain, has launched a special promotion as part of a global tourism campaign.

World Traveller economy seats start from 3,800 yuan; World Traveller Plus seats from 9,800 yuan.

The deal will continue through November 22. Discount fares are only valid for flights departing before March 31.

British Airways' customers enjoy access to an extensive network of flights that arrive, depart and transfer through Terminal 5 of London Heathrow, ensuring a smooth and seamless travel experience.

"We are delighted to be working with VisitBritain to showcase why

it is such a great time for our customers in China to visit the UK and fly with British Airways," said Kevin McQuillan, British Airways regional general manager, East Asia. "With the special fares that we have announced, your ultimate British experience is just around the corner."

"There is no better time for the people of China to experience all of the great things that Britain has

Dining



Molten fondue at the Swissotel Beijing

The Swiss are well known for their chocolates, but less known for their cheeses.

Visit Swissotel Beijing and experience the bubbly rich and smooth taste of fondue. The Swiss and mushroom cheeses, imported direct from Switzerland for the fondue pot, are prepared by Swissotel's expert culinary team.

A mellow, dry white wine makes a great accompaniment. Add a touch of French cherry brandy, nutmeg and freshly ground pepper to the simmering pot.

Swiss fondue is very similar to Chinese hotpot in its simple preparation. The cheese, which melts from the bottom of the pot, is used as a dip for a skewer of freshly baked bread. The meal is usually accompanied by crunchy pickles, small potatoes and cherry tomatoes.

Feel the warmth from the bubbling pot and let the smell take you away to the snowy Swiss Alps.

Where: Cafe Swiss, Swissotel Beijing, 2 Chaoyangmen Bei Dajie, Chaoyang District
Tel: 6553 2288 ext. 2127

2011 Hilton Beijing Food & Wine Experience

The Hilton Beijing's Food & Wine Experience is returning with its highly anticipated 14th installment this fall. On November 12th, the Hilton Beijing will be dedicating an entire day to a spread of local and international wines accompanied by delicacies from all over the globe.

With more than 2,000 booths showing 1,000 of the world's top names in food and wine, this year is shaping up to be bigger and better than ever.

The Vinopolitan, Hilton

Beijing's Food & Wine Experience XIV, is widely considered the capital's top wine event of the year. It is attended by food enthusiasts, wine connoisseurs and visitors from around the world who hope to learn more about the fast emerging market.

Where: Hilton Beijing, 1 Dongfang Lu, Dongsanhuan Bei Lu, Chaoyang District

When: November 12, Trade, 11 am - 7 pm; Public, 1 - 7 pm

Admission: 260 yuan with dinner buffet
Tel: 5865 5125

24**Next Week****Exhibition****Willy Eisensitz – From Secessionism to Expressionism**

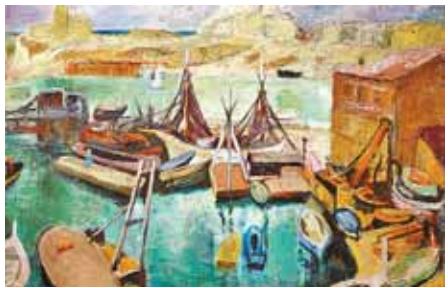
This exhibition presents 66 oil paintings by Austrian artist Willy Eisensitz (1889-1974), most of which come from the Schutz Arts Collection Institution. In 1912, Eisensitz moved to Paris and experienced different schools of art, including impressionism, cubism and expressionism. He loved nature and found enlightenment in the landscape of Provence.

Where: Hall 7, National Art Museum of China, 1 Wusi Dajie, Dongcheng District

When: Until November 8, 10 am - 5 pm

Admission: Free

Tel: 6400 6326

Fri, Nov. 4**Sat, Nov. 5****Nightlife****I'll Be There**

Kulu Leong is a Beijing folk musician who plays quiet and unadorned music. *I'll Be There* is his latest album, released in October.

Where: Mako Livehouse, 36 Guangqu Lu, Chaoyang District

When: 8 pm

Admission: 80 yuan advance purchase, 100 yuan at the door

Tel: 5205 1112

Nightlife**Ah-Q Jazz Arkestra**

Founded in 2003 in Beijing, the Ah-Q Jazz Arkestra performs classical, modern, Latin jazz and funk. The band includes saxophonist Kenny Liu, trombonist Matt Roberts, keyboardist David Moser, bassist Da Zhong and drummer Scott Silverman. They released their first album, *One Year*, in 2007.

Where: Jianghu Bar, 7 Dongmianhua Hutong, Jiaodaokou Nan Dajie, Dongcheng District

When: 9 pm

Admission: 40 yuan advance purchase, 50 yuan at the door

Tel: 6401 5269

Movie**Butterfly Murders (1979)**

Directed by Tsui Hark, this Hong Kong martial arts film is about a scholar who writes a book about a case of butterfly murders, but the publishers are killed by butterflies. It is Tsui's feature debut and regarded as the start of the Hong Kong New Wave Movement.

Where: Italian Institute of Culture, Sanlitun Dongyi Jie, Chaoyang District

When: 7 pm

Admission: Free

Tel: 6532 2187

**Mon, Nov. 7****Nightlife****The Album Leaf**

This post-rock band is a solo musical project founded in California by guitarist Jimmy LaValle in 1998. The band is famous for its use of synthesizers and a Rhodes piano. They often perform with projected visual art.

Where: Mao Livehouse, 111 Gulou Dong Dajie, Dongcheng District

When: 8 pm

Admission: 200 yuan

Tel: 6402 5080

Sun, Nov. 6**Tue, Nov. 8****Exhibition**
Credit Suisse Today Art Award 2011 Finalists Exhibition

Judges of the Credit Suisse Today Art Award have selected six finalists: Chen Chieh-jen, Li Mu, Liu Wei, Huang Ran, Zheng Guogu and Wang Jianwei. This exhibition shows the representative works of these artists. Chen obsesses in slow-motion video; Li focuses on daily life with *Blue Books* and *Left Hand Diary*; Liu is famous for his large installations that use ironic visual imagery; Huang's creation involves conceptual art and art criticism; Zheng deals with the relationship between classical art and pop art, between tradition and cynical reality; Wang's major topics are uncertainty and questioning.

Where: Today Art Museum, 32 Baizihuan Lu, Chaoyang District

When: Until November 13, 10 am - 5 pm

Admission: 20 yuan, 10 yuan for students

Tel: 5876 9804

Wed, Nov. 9**Concert****The 12 Cellists of the Berlin Philharmonic Concert**

It was in 1972 that a radio production of Julius Klengel's Hymnus for 12 cellos with the Berlin Philharmonic became the impetus for founding this all-cello ensemble. Besides classical music, the group also plays jazz, tango and avant-garde.

Where: Concert Hall of the National Center for the Performing Arts, 2 Xi Chang'an Jie, Xicheng District

When: 7:30 pm

Admission: 180-580 yuan

Tel: 6655 0000

Movie
Mrs. Henderson Presents (2005)

This British comedy is based on the true story of the Windmill Theater in London. Laura Henderson purchased a theater as a post-widowhood hobby in 1973. To maintain the theater, she suggested that they add nude female performers like at the Moulin Rouge in Paris.

Where: China Film Archive, 3 Wenhuiyuan Lu, Xiaoxitians, Haidian District

When: 7 pm

Admission: 20 yuan

Tel: 5900 9473

Thu, Nov. 10

(By He Jianwei)